

For Immediate Release:
Wednesday, May 15, 2002
Contact:
Jana Kettering
Public Information Officer
801-538-6339

Utah's CHIP Open Enrollment Begins June 3

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – Utah's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) will hold open enrollment June 3 – 14, 2002. All eligible Utah children who apply during this time period will be accepted. Applications are available now and will be accepted beginning June 3. Families wanting to apply online can do so beginning June 3.

The two-week open enrollment period will be the first opportunity in 2002 for many of Utah's working families to obtain low-cost health care coverage for their children since CHIP's continual enrollment was capped last year. CHIP is a state health insurance plan for children whose families cannot afford private health insurance. The program was capped in December 2001 due to state funding projections and an unexpected growth in the number of children receiving coverage. Because of the natural "graduation" of enrollees, CHIP now has the capacity to enroll more children who are currently without health insurance. "Most participants move off the program in about a year. Of those who move off the program, forty-percent obtain employer-sponsored health care coverage," said Chad Westover, Director, Utah CHIP. Next month's open enrollment will fill the slots that were vacated." In addition, families are required to pay premiums of approximately \$15-25 every three months so CHIP can serve as many children as possible.

"CHIP has made a difference in the lives of thousands of Utah Children," said Mrs. Jacalyn Leavitt. "I am pleased that we are able to offer this valuable health care benefit to families who would otherwise go without insurance. This program helps parents and their children when they need it most." In fact, the CHIP program has helped nearly 50,000 children since 1998 when the uninsured rate was 8.5 percent (1996 data). CHIP

Page 2 of 2 - Utah's CHIP Open Enrollment Begins June 3

Applying for coverage during the Open Enrollment period is simple. Families can call the CHIP information line at, 1-877-KIDS-NOW, to receive a mailed application or to find a Utah Department of Health (UDOH) eligibility office in their area. Starting June 3 and ending June 14, families will be able to apply online at www.utahchip.org. In order to be enrolled, applications must be submitted between June 3 and June 14, 2002. Families must meet eligibility guidelines based family size and income. Children under the age of 19 who are U.S. citizens or legal residents and who are not currently covered by health insurance may qualify. For example, a family of four earning up to \$36,200 a year may qualify for CHIP.

“The main focus in public health is prevention. Because medical care is often delayed without insurance, major medical problems result and children suffer,” said Rod Betit, UDOH Executive Director. “Comprehensive medical care with a focus on prevention will keep these kids from showing up the emergency room with a serious condition that could have been prevented with a simple office visit.”

The UDOH believes that by holding a portion of the open enrollment before most schools break for summer, that children will be able to receive application materials from their schools. Health care coverage keeps kids healthy and healthy kids are better prepared to learn. The fact is, a lack of health insurance can have a serious impact on a child's health and learning. “We're thrilled to hear the news that CHIP will be available to even more children,” said Lynne Calame, district nurse for Salt Lake City School District. “CHIP takes the pressure off – we can make sure children receive the coverage they need when they need it most.” CHIP provides medical coverage similar to private health insurance programs. Benefits include regular check-ups, immunizations, prescription drugs, hospitalization and dental exams.

